



2023

ANNUAL REPORT



**Special
Olympics**
Georgia

"Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be
brave in the attempt."



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our CEO and
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Special Olympics Georgia



To our Thousands of Friends and Supporters,

2023 was a fantastic year and thanks for being there for the organization. Special Olympics Georgia (SOGA) is excited and looking forward to what is next. In 2023, we were able to successfully host four State Games, increase the number of active volunteers to 48,373, attend the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin, Germany with SOGA athletes bringing home medals and ribbons in sailing and kayaking, and sell out all of the five special event fundraisers.

We are so proud of each of the 18,546 registered athletes in our state and the athletes who attended and represented SOGA at public meetings and events. They gave incredible and inspiring presentations by telling their life stories, as well as, their involvement in Special Olympics Georgia. SOGA athletes continue to shine and tell everyone about their abilities, not their disabilities.

Your contribution of time and financial donations have put the organization in a solid position and we are planning many more great things for the near future. Thank you for believing in the athletes' courage, joyfulness, and competitiveness. They enrich all of our lives more than they'll ever know.

Stay tuned for everything coming your way in 2024 and we appreciate you and your dedication. Log in to www.specialolympicsga.org and see how you can get more involved.

Warm Regards,

Antoinette Ellison

Chairperson, Board of Directors

Georgia Milton-Sheats

Chief Executive Officer

THE ATHLETES OF 2023



Paige C.

HENRY COUNTY

Paige has been involved with Special Olympics Georgia for most of her life and has participated in various sports.

Currently, she plays Bocce at Fall Games, travels to North Carolina to participate in Southeast Alpine Skiing, plays Tennis at Summer Games, and rides in the Horse Show.

Paige served as the Law Enforcement Torch Run Athlete Ambassador from 2010-2012 and served on the Executive Council.

She currently represents SOGA as a Global Messenger. This position takes her all over the state for speaking engagements, where she shares her story and the impact Special Olympics has had on her life.



Michael M.

COBB COUNTY

Michael has participated in Special Olympics Georgia as an athlete since middle school. He has competed in bowling, softball, basketball, table tennis, cross country, skiing, and his favorite - soccer! He has traveled to Chicago, Orlando, Salt Lake City, and Rhode Island to compete. Michael has also been a Publix Associate for over 10 years and a cashier for over 8 years. Every year he looks forward to the Special Olympics Campaign, "Light the Torch", to raise money and awareness for Special Olympics. Michael thanks Special Olympics and Publix for allowing him the opportunity to meet new friends, as well as, the opportunity to have a blast playing all of his favorite sports!

THE ATHLETES OF 2023

Female Athlete of the Year - Kelsey N.

HOUSTON COUNTY

Kelsey was named the 2023 Most Positive Special Olympics Athlete in the State of Georgia. She received her award on June 7th, 2023, in Atlanta at the College Football Hall of Fame. Atlanta Falcons' Kicker Younghoe Koo presented her and the other winners with their awards. She is the only student-athlete (any sport) from the Houston County School System and the only Special Olympics athlete in Georgia to win the award. Kelsey was 1 of 32 to receive the Positive Athlete Award because not only is she making a difference at her school but also in her community. Currently she is serving as a Special Olympics Georgia Global Messenger and is the 2023 Special Olympics Georgia Female Athlete of the Year. During the past couple of years, she has won 9 state level medals (6 gold and 3 silver) in four different sports (swimming, golf, athletics, and bowling). Kelsey graduated in May from Veterans High School in Kathleen, Georgia. Earlier this year, Kelsey established a permanent community scholarship fund that will assist college aged students with disabilities reach their life goals, by receiving education, life skills and vocational training.



Male Athlete of the Year - Adrian W.

AUGUSTA STARS

Adrian is a 20+ year veteran of the Augusta Stars. Adrian was always nicely dressed. He competed in Bocce and Bowling. By far, Bowling was his favorite sport. Adrian always had a smile on his face, was respectful, and put people in a good mood just by his charisma. He won countless medals during his time with Special Olympics Georgia. He usually won gold in bowling. Once the medal was around his neck, he would delight everyone with tales of how he had won it. You couldn't help but love him and his outgoing and positive attitude. He was definitely one of the good guys. Unfortunately, four days after returning from the 2022 Special Olympics Georgia Indoor Winter Games, Adrian passed away unexpectedly. We were all shocked when he was admitted to the hospital. During our trip to the Games, no one could see anything different with him. On Monday, January 31st he took his gold medal to Lynndale Training Center and spent most of the day telling everybody about his trip. Everyone said he was smiling and laughing throughout the day. It was later that evening that he collapsed and ultimately passed on February 3rd. He was 64 and a friend to all who knew him.

THE ATHLETES OF 2023



Georgia Milton-Sheats Athlete of the Year Award Winner – Kathy K.

Please join SOGA in congratulating the first winner of the annual Georgia Milton-Sheats Athlete of the Year Award to athlete, Kathy K.! Kathy has been competing with Special Olympics Georgia for over 40 years. Swimming, Softball, Bocce, Equestrian, Cycling and Bowling are the favorite sports that Kathy has taken home gold in over her tenure. She has received hundreds of medals and ribbons during her career and has been an integral part in the success of her teammates over the years.

Kathy was always the first to show up for practice, never missing one, and even giving rides to her fellow teammates when they were in need. She truly embodies the spirit of Special Olympics and is truly deserving to receive the very first, Georgia Milton-Sheats Athlete of the Year award!

COACH/LOCAL COORDINATOR OF 2023



We are excited to recognize the 2023 Outstanding Coach/Local Coordinator of the Year. This individual is outstanding! She has been involved with Special Olympics Georgia for over 20 years. Since beginning her job within the school system where she teaches, she quickly took over as the local coordinator for the school system's Special Olympics program. During that period, she has built the program to serve over 2,000 athletes!

This individual has organized and conducted hundreds of local competitions, taken her delegation to State Games over 60 times, and she has attended both the USA Games and World Games as an official delegate. Kim S. from the DeKalb County Schools agency is extremely deserving to be named the 2023 Outstanding Coach/Local Coordinator of the Year.

SOGA BY THE NUMBERS

Special Olympics Georgia (SOGA) provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in 29 Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, and four State Competitions. Participation in sports provides athletes opportunities to develop physical fitness, share friendships, interact with the community, and gain confidence to carry throughout life. Our goal is to help bring persons with intellectual disabilities into the larger society under conditions whereby they are accepted, respected, and given the chance to become useful and productive citizens. When we achieve these goals through our sports and training program, we demonstrate that Special Olympics Georgia has a unique value.

29

SPORTS



18,546

ATHLETES

48,373

VOLUNTEERS



17,703

UNIFIED PARTNERS

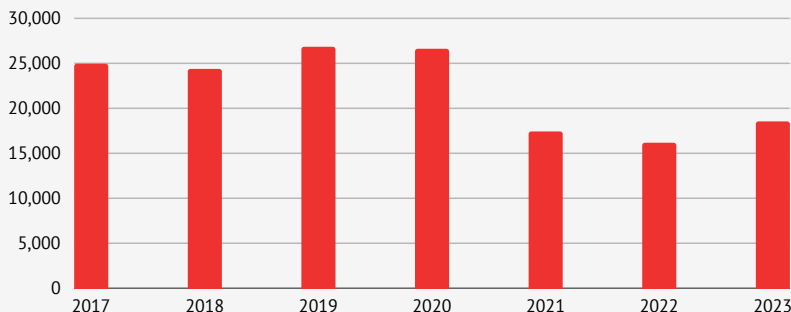


10,003

CERTIFIED COACHES



ATHLETE GROWTH



SOGA BY THE NUMBERS CONT.

122

ACTIVE COUNTIES



180

AGENCIES



168

ACCREDITED LOCAL/AREA
PROGRAMS



1,269

SCHOOLS



71

PARKS & RECREATION
PARTNERS



120,980

VOLUNTEER HOURS



SPECIAL OLYMPICS UNIFIED SPORTS®



Special Olympics Unified Sports® is an initiative that combines approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes and athletes without intellectual disabilities (called Partners) on sports teams for training and competition. Age and ability matching of athletes and Partners is defined on a sport-by-sport basis.



Mack Hollins, #18 with the Atlanta Falcons NFL team, is a Special Olympics Global Ambassador and wanted to give back to athletes in a big way. Newly signed with the Falcons, Mack is now an Atlanta local and partnered with Special Olympics Georgia and Unified School, Denmark High School, to provide a memorable, once-in-a-lifetime experience.

UNIFIED SPORTS® - Introduced in 1988, Unified Sports furthers Special Olympics Georgia's commitment to foster inclusion into school and community sports programs. Unified Sports programs bring together on the same team, athletes with and without intellectual disabilities.

These teams train and compete with other Unified Sports teams in 29 sports - alpine skiing/snowboarding, athletics, artistic gymnastics, badminton, basketball, bocce, bowling, cheerleading, cycling, dance, equestrian, figure/speed ice skating, flag football, floor hockey, golf, kayaking, pickleball, powerlifting, rhythmic gymnastics, sailing, soccer, softball, roller skating, swimming, table tennis, tennis and volleyball. Unified Sports furthers Special Olympics Georgia's commitment to foster inclusion into school and community sports programs.

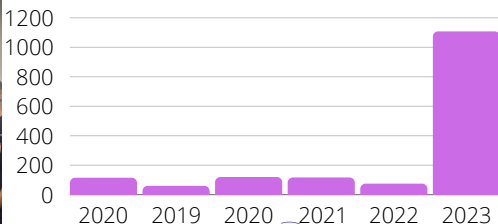
HEALTHY ATHLETES & MEDFESTS IN 2023



Healthcare professionals volunteer their time to provide health screenings and education to athletes in 5 different disciplines. The Healthy Athletes Program offers a fun and welcoming healthcare environment for athletes, while working to improve healthcare policies and programs for individuals with intellectual disabilities.



This year we were able to host our annual Medfest's! Over 759 athletes came out and received free medicals and enjoyed games and crafts with their peers! Huge shout out to our medical providers and their team for helping us provide our athletes with their free medicals so they are able to continue to compete in all our state competitions!



Healthy Athletes' Attendees

Special Olympics Georgia



Thanks and appreciates the support of the 2024 Honorary Board of Directors

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 Michael Twiner, Farmer, Peachtree Farms
 Greg Vernovage, Program Manager, Vision Development & Construction
 Carl Walker, Senior Vice President of General Services, Fiserv
 Chris Ward, Area President (Georgia), Gallagher
 Richard Wells, Partner, KPMG LLP
 L.J. Wilhelmi, Vice President / Broker, JLL
 Katy Wilson, Special Olympics Georgia Athlete
 Mike Wolf



2023 STATE GAMES ¹²



Winter Games

January 27th - 28th

Athletes: 1,321
Coaches: 461
Unified Partners: 105
Volunteers: 1,396



Summer Games

May 19th - 21st

Athletes: 1,245
Coaches: 381
Unified Partners: 220
Volunteers: 1,219



Horse Show

October 6th - 7th

Athletes: 47
Coaches: 20
Handlers: 24
Volunteers: 64



Fall Games

October 6th - 7th

Athletes: 842
Coaches: 266
Unified Partners: 125
Volunteers: 274

GUARDIANS OF THE FLAME

LAW ENFORCEMENT TORCH RUN

- 73 ACTIVE AGENCIES ACROSS GEORGIA -

The Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) had another impactful year for the athletes.

They raised **\$1,655,705** throughout their various fundraising events and initiatives.

Publix, Publix Customers, and Proctor & Gamble teamed up with LETR and SOGA to raise about **\$1,192,214** with the annual Torch Icon sales at the registers.

LETR, SOGA, and the community were freezin' for a reason at Acworth Beach while raising **\$232,946** for SOGA athletes at **Polar Plunge**.

Dunkin' partnered with LETR on National Donut Day to raise almost **\$64,516** with their **Cops in Donut Shops** event held across 220 Dunkin' locations in Georgia.

LETR Executive Council 2023

CHAIR PERSON

John Clay - Warner Robins Police Department

VICE CHAIR

Jenna Duncan - Cobb County Sheriff's Office

MEMBERS

John Clifton - Johns Creek Police Department

Laterra Davis - Department of Juvenile Justice

Amie Garrett - Cobb County Sheriff's Office

Evan Hodge - Athlete

Greg Martin - Warner Robins Police Department

Nicolette Pinnock - Gwinnett County Schools

Tyler Seymour - Johns Creek Police Department

Mark Stevens - Dunwoody Police Department

Lisa Vorrasi - Georgia Bureau of Investigation

Beth Walsh - Emory University Police Department

Jason Rozier - Gwinnett County Police Department



- SPECIAL EVENTS -

Although sports are the center of our mission, we step off the field to raise funds and awareness for our athletes and individuals with intellectual disabilities so they can benefit from all that SOGA has to offer. Some of our 2023 events included:

The 15th annual Polar Plunge was held at Acworth Beach on February 24th. We had 341 Plungers come out and raise money to jump into the freezing lake. With the help of all our supporters for this event, we raised \$232,946.



Our 18th annual Duck Pluck had a great turnout for 2023! We gave away 1st - 5th place prizes to our contributors. Our goal of adopting 11,000 ducks was met and our amazing supporters helped us raise \$86,056.



The Bob Busse Golf Classic was held at The Country Club of Roswell on November 6th. Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and golfers this event raised \$117,450, which surpassed our goal. 128 golfers from 32 different teams showed up to compete in this 28th annual event to help raise money for our athletes.

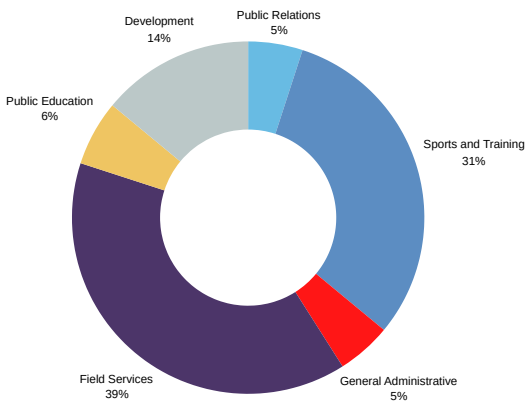


We are always thankful for Marlow's Tavern and the rest of the vendors that continue to make the Marlow's Tavern Golf Classic a huge success year after year. We had 144 golfers participate in our 25th annual event on October 12th. This year we were able to raise a net of \$65,514 at the event and it was such a great turn out per usual!

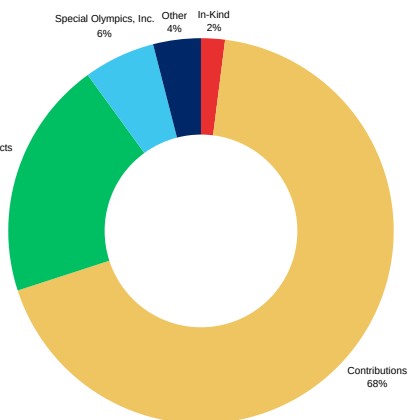


SOGA 2023 Financials in Review

SOGA Expense Trends



SOGA Revenue Trends



BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024

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Tom Nichols - President - Winter Construction

-VICE-CHAIRPERSON

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Rudolph Richards - Athlete

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Barbara Moore

Jimmy Nakos - Director Tax Accounting and Planning - Delta Airlines, Inc.

Alicia Wilson - Director of Operations and Human Resources - Inwood Holdings

SOGA TEAM 2024

Georgia Milton-Sheats
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Intern

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Communications and Public Relations Manager

Alexander Grainger
Program Manager

Jake Baxter
Health and Wellness Manager

Meredith Elizabeth Crum
Director of Programs

Ansley Bonner
Volunteer and Event Manager

Kristina Harrison
Director of Business Administration

Robert Yost
Chief Operating Officer

Chance Yeomans
Program Manager

Lewis Gordon
Intern

Sam Elkins
Sports and Program Intern

Craig Pugh
Senior Account Manager

Liz Smith
Director of Sports

Sara Gomez
Program Manager

David Crawford
Chief Sports & Training Officer

Mary Thomason
Chief Development Officer

Sean Munroe
Program Manager



Sponsors and Contributors of 2023

The confidence that stems from athletic competition both on and off the field would not be enhanced without the generous support of many individuals, corporations, foundations, and organizations. These names represent those who believed in and supported the 18,546 athletes of SOGA in 2023. Thank you!

Statewide Premier Sponsors and Platinum Sponsors



Statewide Premier Sponsors and Platinum Sponsors



\$50,000 and Up

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Anonymous Anonymous
Harmony Foster, UPS
Publix Super Markets, Inc.
Tom Nichols, Winter Construction
Dunkin' Donuts
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The IMLAY Foundation
Yardi

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Barbara Moore, Park 'N Fly
Antoinette Ellison, Jones Day

Toyota Financial Services
 Arrow Exterminators
 Dr. Karen Carter, Augusta Developmental
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 Chris Bernet, South State Bank
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\$1,000 to \$2,499

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 Caymus Vineyard
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 Robert J. Taylor
 Steven Roberts
 Akins Company
 Ace Electric Inc.
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 Austin Brannen, Euphoric Developmental Company
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 Greg Vernovage, Vision Development &
 Construction
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 Joe Hamilton, USI Insurance Services
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 Katie McGuirk, Ansley Atlanta Realtors
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 Lawson Burnat, Sterling Seacrest Pritchard

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 Margie Wimberly
 Mark Kauffman
 Mary Nunnally
 Mike Flint, McClure & Kornheiser LLC
 Mike Twiner, Peachtree Farm
 Mitchell Brannen, NAI Brannen Goddard
 Paul Aglialaro, Roarke
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 Rayle EMC Foundation
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 Shelly Donaldson, Cumberland Trust Company
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Nathaniel Bittner, Ryan
Aileen and Doug Horton
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The Stutts Family
Thomas Donovan
Thomas J. Regan Jr.
William Ortwein

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